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INTEGRATED AND COORDINATED IMPLEMENTATION AND FOLLOW-UP OF THE MAJOR UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCES AND SUMMITS

Report of the Secretary-General

CONTENTS

		Paragraphs	Page
I.	INTRODUCTION	1 - 6	2
II.	ACTION AT THE INTERGOVERNMENTAL LEVEL	7 - 18	2
III.	PROGRESS AT THE INTER-AGENCY LEVEL	19 - 58	10
	A. Action taken by the Administrative Committee on Coordination	19 - 24	10
	B. Work of the standing consultative committees and ad hoc task forces of the Administrative Committee on Coordination	25 - 56	11
	C. World Food Summit	57	19
	D. United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II)	58	19
IV.	PROGRESS AT THE COUNTRY LEVEL	59 - 66	19
	A. Background	59 - 60	19
	B. Overview	61 - 65	20
	C. Complementarity with other inter-agency initiatives	66	22
V.	CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS	67 - 71	23

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I. INTRODUCTION

1. The global conferences organized by the United Nations during the 1990s have helped devise internationally agreed policies and programmes relating to the environment and development, social development, population and development, women, children, human rights, small island developing States, human settlements, and food security. The outcomes of these conferences constitute a comprehensive development agenda with many common themes.

2. While there is at present a hiatus in conferences, the task of integrating the internationally agreed programmes into national policies and actions has yet to be fully accomplished. The United Nations system is a key instrument in the hands of Governments for meeting this challenge. However, the system can assist Governments in this task only if it can mobilize a coherent response to the vast and overlapping elements of the development agenda that has emerged from global conferences.

3. The Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC), at its first regular session in 1995, recognized the need for a common framework in order to assist countries in the coordinated implementation and monitoring of the programmes of action adopted by global conferences. ACC agreed that such a common framework should promote a coordinated response by the United Nations system to cross-cutting themes and should help reduce the burden of reporting on countries and on United Nations system organizations with regard to implementation.

4. The Economic and Social Council adopted a set of far-reaching agreed conclusions at its coordination segment in 1995 (Agreed Conclusions 1995/1), by which it launched a coordinated approach to the conference follow-up by the United Nations system and made that goal a major thrust of its work.

5. The present report is submitted in response to Council resolution 1996/36 and General Assembly resolutions 51/171 and 51/177. In its resolution, the Council, inter alia, invited ACC to present the reports on the work of its task forces on an enabling environment for economic and social development, basic social services for all, and employment and sustainable livelihoods, as well as the inter-agency committees on sustainable development and women and gender equality to the substantive session of 1997 of the Council.

6. The report presents to the Council an overview of the work of the inter-agency task forces and the two inter-agency committees, as well as the arrangements for a coordinated follow-up to the World Food Summit and the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II) within the broader context of coordinated follow-up to conferences at the intergovernmental, inter-agency and field levels.

II. ACTION AT THE INTERGOVERNMENTAL LEVEL

7. In his report on the coordinated follow-up to conferences submitted to the Council in 1995 (E/1995/86), the Secretary-General identified the cross-cutting themes of recent global conferences, and made proposals for a coordinated

approach for sharing of responsibilities between the Assembly, the Council and the functional commissions with primary responsibility, at the functional level, for implementation of the conferences' outcome. Agreed Conclusions 1995/1 adopted by the Council at its 1995 coordination segment addressed, among other things, the complementarity and coherence of the work of these bodies. In its latest resolution on restructuring and revitalization of the United Nations in the economic, social and related fields (Assembly resolution 50/227), the Assembly, inter alia, built upon the Council's 1995 recommendations and gave detailed guidance on its work and that of the Council and its subsidiary machinery in ensuring a coordinated follow-up to conferences (see A/52/155-E/1997/68). Since then, follow-up to conferences has taken place within the context of this three-tiered structure.

8. The Assembly has also addressed policy and institutional issues related to the follow-up to and implementation of recent major conferences in the economic, social and related areas. In this respect, two trends might be pointed out. First, the Assembly has underscored the need for the commitments and conference outcomes to be monitored in an integrated manner. For instance, in addition to its resolution 51/177 on the implementation of the outcome of Habitat II and its resolution 51/171 on the World Food Summit, the Assembly, in its resolution 51/173, called for the review and appraisal of the Declaration on International Economic Cooperation, in particular the Revitalization of Economic Growth and Development in Developing Countries, and of the International Development Strategy for the Fourth United Nations Development Decade to be coordinated with the follow-up work on major United Nations conferences. At its fifty-first session, the Assembly also decided to pursue an integrated approach by devoting plenary meetings to reviews of the implementation of the outcomes of the World Summit for Children and the World Summit for Social Development and by increasing the coherence of the work of the Second and Third Committees.

9. However, thus far, the structure of the Assembly's agenda and the separate streams of work in the Second and Third Committees have not made it possible to consider conference follow-up issues as "interlinked and contributing to an integrated framework", as called for in paragraph 2 of the Council's Agreed Conclusions 1995/1; rather, more often than not, these have been treated more or less independently from one another. Also, integrated reporting is still rare.

10. It must be underscored, however, that a large part of the Assembly's work in the economic, social and related areas does in fact address cross-cutting themes of international conferences - such as external debt and finance for development, trade and development, poverty eradication, science and technology, advancement of women, human rights, and problems of countries in special situations. However, reporting on these themes is not systematically placed in the context of conference provisions, nor is the guidance thereon translated systematically by the rest of the United Nations system as guidance and evaluation for conference follow-up as such.

11. Ways thus need to be found to maximize synergies between the follow-up to individual conferences at the level of the Assembly. For instance, the examination at mid-decade of the goals of the World Summit for Children should feed into the monitoring of the implementation of other conference outcomes, many of which endorsed the same goals. The five-year review of the Vienna Plan

of Action on human rights could also take into account the work in other follow-up processes such as those in regard to women and children.

12. As for the Council itself, since 1995, it has devoted considerable attention to promoting coordinated and integrated follow-up to conferences. Pursuant to this approach, at its coordination segment, in 1996, the Council examined poverty eradication as a cross-cutting theme and provided extensive guidance to the United Nations system for improving coordination of poverty eradication activities at the field and headquarters levels. At its current session, the Council will undertake a similar examination of the topic of mainstreaming the gender perspective in all policies and programmes of the United Nations system. The topic of its high-level segment - "Fostering an enabling environment for development, financial flows, including capital flows, investment, trade" - is also a cross-cutting theme emanating from a number of major conferences (see E/1997/67). As a sign of the importance it attaches to the goal of coordinated follow-up, the Council decided to place a separate item on its agenda entitled "Integrated and coordinated implementation and follow-up of the major international United Nations conferences and summits".

13. The Council also decided to enhance complementarity and coordination among its functional commissions, and between their work and that of the Council. In 1996, it made detailed recommendations for harmonizing the work programmes of functional commissions on various aspects of poverty eradication (see A/51/3 (Part I), chap. III). A report on the follow-up to its agreed conclusions of that year (E/1997/58) is presented to the Council.

14. Box 1 summarizes the main outcome of the work of the functional commissions in 1997 for follow-up to conferences. In accordance with directives of the Council, the functional commissions have increasingly placed their work within the context of coordinated follow-up to major conferences. On specific themes, they have focused increasingly on their area of responsibilities and have taken account of provisions of other conferences and of the work in other bodies thereon. There has been growing interaction among the commissions; they have exchanged inputs, and more such exchanges are planned for the coming years. There was also a dialogue with the Council, in particular on the follow-up to the Council's agreed conclusions of 1996. Also, the Commission for Social Development transmitted its agreed conclusions on employment and sustainable livelihoods (see E/1997/26, chap. I, resolution 35/2) as an input to the Council's 1997 high-level segment. In addition, efforts were made for more integrated reporting to the commissions, which was facilitated by the use of task managers. However, there were relatively few instances of consultations between the Bureaux of the functional commissions, and between them and the Bureau of the Council. A good example of an integrated approach to conferences is the work of the Statistical Commission, which examined the statistical implications of the International Conference on Population and Development, the World Summit for Social Development and the Fourth World Conference on Women, and endorsed a Minimum National Social Data Set as a contribution to establishing a common national and international indicators database.

Box 1. Main outcomes of functional commissions in 1997 related to conference follow-up

Commission on Population and Development: draft resolution for the consideration of the Council on international migration and development (see E/1997/31).

Commission for Social Development: agreed conclusion on priority theme: "Productive employment and sustainable livelihoods" (E/1997/27, resolution 35/2); transmitted to the Council for input into its 1997 high-level segment.

Commission on Human Rights: resolution 1997/69 on comprehensive implementation of and follow-up to the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action; resolution 1997/8 on the right to food; measures on human rights and the environment (see E/1997/23).

Statistical Commission: in following up the statistical implications of recent major international conferences, the Statistical Commission adopted a Minimum National Social Data Set (MNSDS) (15 indicators) (see E/1997/24).

Furthermore, the Expert Group on the statistical implications of recent major United Nations conferences presented recommendations on a work programme in statistics and indicators for integrated follow-up to recent United Nations conferences in the social field.

Commission on the Status of Women: agreed conclusions on (1) women and the environment, (2) women in power and decision-making, (3) women and the economy, (4) education and training of women. With draft resolution XX recommended for its adoption, the Council would, inter alia, endorse these agreed conclusions (see E/1997/27).

Commission on Sustainable Development: the Commission acted as the preparatory body for the 1997 special session of the Assembly for the purpose of an overall review and appraisal of the implementation of Agenda 21, and also recommended modalities for the 1997 review of the implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action.

Commission on Human Settlements (standing committee of the Council): resolutions on revitalization of the Habitat Centre, review of the working methods of the Commission: the involvement of partners, and future role of the Commission.

15. There is however, scope for further promoting a coordinated approach among the functional commissions. In particular, there continues to be significant overlap and duplication in some aspects of the work of the commissions, although each commission may be focusing on a somewhat different dimension of the issue. For instance, the Commission for Social Development, the Commission on the Status of Women and the Commission for Sustainable Development each addressed some dimensions of the international enabling environment for development. There is still room for the commissions to make more use of the work of other

functional commissions - or of the Council and the Assembly - in dealing with cross-cutting issues. This will be particularly important for example if, in 2000, the Commission on Sustainable Development addresses the theme of "financial resources, trade, investment, and economic growth", as proposed in its draft programme of work (see E/1997/25, chap. I, sect. C), as well as for the work of the Commission on Human Rights on the human rights effects of structural adjustment programmes and debt. The following table summarizes multi-year work programmes of the functional commissions between 1997 and 2002 for follow-up to the conference within their purview.

Table. Programmes of work of the Council's functional commissions

	Multi-year work programme	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002
Selected major event or events of the year		- Overall review of WCHR - Special session of the Assembly on narcotic drugs	- Overall review of ICPD - International Year of Older Persons	- Overall review of WSSD and FWCW	- Review of WSC - Review of Habitat II	- Review of the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa
Commission on Population and Development	yes, 1996-1999	Health and mortality (emphasis on health-development linkages, on gender, on age)	Population growth, structure, distribution (emphasis: sustained economic growth and sustainable development, including education) - Quinquennial review and appraisal of ICPD			
Commission on Sustainable Development	yes, 1997-2000 Yearly: - Enabling environment - Social development goals in structural adjustment programmes - Resources - Framework for cooperation in social development	Promoting social integration and participation of all, including vulnerable and disadvantaged groups and persons	- Social services for all - Initiation of the overall review of WSSD	Contribution of the Commission to the overall review and appraisal of the Summit		
Commission on the Status of Women	yes, 1997-2000	- Violence against women - Women and armed conflicts - Human rights of women - The girl child	- Women and health - Institutional mechanisms for the advancement of women - Initiation of comprehensive review and appraisal of FWCW	- Comprehensive review of FWCW - Emerging issues		

	Multi-year work programme	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002
Commission on Sustainable Development (subject to approval of the Assembly at its nineteenth special session)	yes, 1994-1997, and draft for 1998-2002; overriding issues: poverty, consumption and production patterns	Sectoral: integrated fresh water management Cross-sectoral: transfer of technology, capacity-building, education, science, awareness-building Economic sector/ major group: industry	Comprehensive review of the Programme of Action for SIDS Sectoral: oceans and seas Cross-sectoral: consumption and production patterns Economic sector: tourism	Sectoral: integrated planning and management of land resources Cross-sectoral: financial resources; trade and investment; economic growth Economic sector/ major group: agriculture	Sectoral: atmosphere, energy Cross-sectoral: information for decision-making and participation; international cooperation for an enabling environment Economic sector/ major group: energy transport	Comprehensive review

Key:

ICPD - International Conference on Population and Development
WSSD - World Summit for Social Development
SIDS - small island developing States
FWCW - Fourth World Conference on Women
WSC - World Summit for Children
WCHR - World Conference on Human Rights

16. The work of a few commissions this year also illustrates the difficulty of grappling with the follow-up and monitoring of the wide range of measures agreed upon at conferences, especially within the available format, time and resources. For a productive and detailed examination of provisions in a given area, intergovernmental work has to benefit from inputs from the country level, the United Nations system, Governments, and actors of civil society, as well as experts and practitioners in the area concerned. Without such complete input, the substantive and technical basis for debate in the commissions is restrained, leading them to repeating outcomes of conferences. The organization of panels during sessions of commissions has shown positive results, but there is scope for further progress.

17. One positive aspect is that the work of the commissions give impetus for further technical work by other forums and bodies, within or outside the United Nations system, or ad hoc meetings. An example of this is resolution 1997/1 of the Commission on Population and Development (see E/1997/25), which, although it does not address substantive aspects of migration and development in detail, does call for further in-depth work, in particular by the Task Force on Basic Social Services for All. The resolution of the Commission on Human Rights on follow-up to the Vienna outcomes is of a similar nature, calling for action by the United Nations system and by the High Commissioner for Human Rights in particular. In paragraph 20 of its Agreed Conclusions 1997/2, the Commission on the Status of Women invited international and multilateral agencies to consider ways to communicate and exchange information, inter alia, through workshops and seminars on lessons learned for mainstreaming a gender perspective in policies and programmes.

18. Effective and coordinated follow-up also requires that intergovernmental bodies draw upon the work of the United Nations coordination mechanisms, as recognized by the Council in 1995. Indeed, the ACC machinery for follow-up to conferences has reported to and interacted closely with the relevant commissions in facilitating their work. The close substantive support provided to the Commission on Sustainable Development by the Inter-Agency Committee for Sustainable Development (IACSD) provides a good precedent in this regard. The Task Force on Basic Social Services for All submitted a report on international migration to the Commission on Population and Development (see E/CN.9/1997/4). The Commission for Social Development held a dialogue with the chairpersons of the inter-agency task forces in both 1996 and 1997, and the Inter-Agency Committee on Women and Gender Equality presented an oral report on its work to the Commission on the Status of Women (see also E/CN.6/1997/2). These interactions provided opportunities for the intergovernmental machinery to make inputs on several substantive issues for inter-agency coordination at the field level. The Commission on Population and Development, for example, provided precise guidance to the Task Force on Basic Social Services for All.

III. PROGRESS AT THE INTER-AGENCY LEVEL

A. Action taken by the Administrative Committee on Coordination

19. During the past few years, ACC, in addressing the main policy issues facing the international community, has endeavoured to promote and organize joint initiatives towards common objectives. ACC has also sought to develop common policy frameworks in key priority areas to guide the work of the United Nations system and to strengthen the Committee's support to the central intergovernmental bodies in the exercise of their system-wide responsibilities. ACC's work in promoting an integrated follow-up to recent global conferences forms part of this overall effort.

20. All concerned inter-agency bodies under ACC have contributed actively to the coordinated follow-up to the recent United Nations conferences. The Consultative Committee on Programme and Operational Questions (CCPOQ) has paid particular attention to this matter. Its work programme has also included issues that are directly relevant to the conference follow-up such as the coordination of activities relating to poverty alleviation. The Inter-Agency Committee on Sustainable Development, while continuing to serve as the main institutional framework for promoting a coherent system-wide response to Agenda 21, has also taken into account the need for a coordinated approach.

21. The three ad hoc inter-agency task forces established by ACC in 1995 - the Inter-Agency Task Force on Basic Social Services for All, chaired by the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the Inter-Agency Task Force on Employment and Sustainable Livelihoods, chaired by the International Labour Organization (ILO), and the Inter-Agency Task Force on Enabling Environment for Economic and Social Development, chaired by the World Bank - were given the task of providing to United Nations resident coordinators and country-level teams coherent system-wide guidance and support in their efforts to assist individual countries to translate the outcome of conferences into concrete national policies and programmes. ACC also decided that cross-cutting policy objectives such as the advancement of women and the promotion of human rights as well as other cross-cutting issues, for example access to communication, should be pursued by each Task Force in the context of the theme or themes assigned to it. In addition, close interlinkages were to be established with the Steering Committee on the United Nations system-wide Special Initiative on Africa.

22. At the same time, recognizing that the Platform for Action adopted at the Fourth World Conference on Women went well beyond the themes of the above-mentioned Task Forces, ACC established in 1996 the Inter-Agency Committee on Women and Gender Equality with the responsibility of addressing on a comprehensive system-wide basis all aspects of the implementation of the Platform for Action, as well as gender-related recommendations emanating from other recent international conferences.

23. Concerning human rights, ACC decided at its first regular session for 1994 to review periodically the implementation of the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action. Accordingly, ACC has decided to include in the agenda of its second regular session for 1997 an item on the preparations for the five-year review of the implementation of the Vienna Declaration and Programme of

Action and for the observance of the fiftieth anniversary of the adoption of the Universal Declaration on Human Rights. In this context, ACC authorized the convening of inter-agency consultations during 1997 to prepare, for its consideration, the assessment of the system's response to the Vienna Programme of Action.

24. Although it may be too early to make an overall assessment, thus far the inter-agency framework established by ACC has worked well. In carrying out their work programmes, the committees of the regular ACC machinery have been pursuing a coordinated approach. The main thrust of the operation of the three task forces has been to develop country-based end products designed to assist countries in the implementation of the programmes of action of recent United Nations conferences. Although the Task Forces have not yet completed their work (the Task Force on Enabling Environment for Economic and Social Development is expected to complete its work in July), there are already indications that the work of the other two task forces has led to important policy development to guide country-level actions. An overview of the work of the relevant ACC inter-agency committees and ad hoc task forces that follows indicates the progress achieved thus far.

B. Work of the standing consultative committees and the ad hoc task forces of the Administrative Committee on Coordination

1. Consultative committees

(a) Inter-Agency Committee on Sustainable Development

25. Following the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, ACC developed a framework for promoting a coherent system-wide response to Conference follow-up requirements. It was built on an innovative model that combined central coordination functions, vested in ACC and the newly established Inter-Agency Committee on Sustainable Development, and decentralized allocation of specific responsibilities to relevant organizations of the United Nations system, based on their comparative strengths, to act as task managers for various programme components of Agenda 21.

26. The task manager system of the Inter-Agency Committee has led to enhanced effectiveness in the use of resources and expertise within the United Nations system. It has rationalized the preparation of reports for the Commission on Sustainable Development and facilitated contributions from organizations based on their specialized mandates. By encouraging systematic communication and information exchange, it has helped disseminate knowledge of means to promote sustainable development and has reduced duplication of effort. It has also helped to promote greater interaction with other inter-agency arrangements. The task manager system has also furthered outreach beyond the framework of the United Nations system by involving other relevant intergovernmental organizations and processes, as well as partners from major groups and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). The Inter-Agency Committee has served as an umbrella for other coordination initiatives, including more specialized inter-agency mechanisms, which have worked best when taking a focused, thematic approach.

27. System-wide work aimed at further broadening and deepening existing inter-agency collaboration and coordination in follow-up to the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development includes continuing consideration of measures aimed at improving the delivery capacity and coordination at the field level, enhancing policy coordination at the global, regional and country levels, better interaction between the Inter-Agency Committee and other bodies and mechanisms of ACC for inter-agency coordination, streamlining requests for reporting, and involvement of organizations outside the United Nations system, among others. In the view of ACC, these evolving arrangements have generally allowed the United Nations system to provide a flexible, collaborative and participatory mechanism to support the implementation of Agenda 21 and the coordination of various sustainable development activities. Successful examples of such system collaboration include the interorganizational programme on the sound management of chemical safety and the informal inter-agency task force on forests.

28. Despite this progress in fostering coordination among agencies, a better balance is still needed in coordination at the global, regional and country/field levels. In particular, cooperation remains underdeveloped in some regions, although in the region of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), agencies have been designated as coordinators for specific programme areas of the regional action programme. The promotion of joint programming at the regional and subregional levels, leading to a more integrated approach that incorporates the social and economic dimensions of sustainable development, also needs to be encouraged.

(b) Inter-Agency Committee on Women and Gender Equality

29. The establishment by the ACC in April 1996 of the Inter-Agency Committee on Women and Gender Equality regularized an ad hoc arrangement on inter-agency work on women's and gender issues that had been in place since the first World Conference on Women (Mexico City, 1975). This decision by ACC also reaffirmed the fact that the mandates resulting from the Fourth World Conference on Women would receive ongoing and sustained attention of the United Nations system.

30. The terms of reference of the new Inter-Agency Committee called for two major areas of focus: firstly, effective coordination and cooperation of the United Nations system in the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and gender-related recommendations emanating from other United Nations conferences; and secondly, effective cooperation and coordination in support of mainstreaming a gender perspective in the work of the United Nations system. The Committee's efforts in this regard will focus on providing advice and guidance to the organizations of the United Nations system, through ACC, and the other relevant parts of its subsidiary machinery on how to translate the mainstreaming mandate into practical reality and on other areas for coordination.

31. The Inter-Agency Committee has held two sessions to date. It is envisaged that the Committee will hold annual sessions in conjunction with the sessions of the Commission on the Status of Women. The Committee is expected to address at each session a few substantive topics that will be chosen either in accordance with the work programmes of intergovernmental bodies of member organizations,

with a view to providing input from the inter-agency perspective, or for their relevance in terms of activities undertaken elsewhere in the inter-agency framework. The Committee also plans to examine performance indicators, to compile best practices and lessons learned, and to identify accountability mechanisms and obstacles to progress in achieving equality for women.

32. In order to ensure that follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and mainstreaming of a gender perspective are an integral part of all United Nations system conference follow-up activities, the Committee has interacted with the ACC ad hoc task forces on conference follow-up and other ACC bodies, through its designated focal point for this purpose, the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), and UNFPA in the specific case of the Task Force on Basic Social Services for All. The Committee has offered its support and assistance in that regard and has called upon ACC to underline the importance of integrating a gender perspective in the work of the task forces and in subsequent activities on integrated follow-up to conferences. It has identified complementarities between the 12 critical areas of concern of the Platform for Action with sections of the programmes, plans and platforms adopted at other recent global conferences, and has provided an indicative list of measures that the task forces could take in their work.

33. The Committee also addressed gender-specific issues with regard to women arising in conflicts, in emergency situations and in peacekeeping operations with a view to providing inputs into the preparation of themes on the agenda of the Commission on the Status of Women at its forty-second session, to be held in 1998. The Committee examined a draft of the report to be submitted to the Council at its 1997 coordination segment on gender mainstreaming with inputs, inter alia, from the Gender in Development Sub-Group of the Joint Consultative Group on Policy.

34. With regard to the issue of quantitative and qualitative indicators used to measure progress in the implementation of Beijing Conference results, the Inter-Agency Committee will assess the efforts of other inter-agency mechanisms, examining this issue with regard to gender dimensions and gender programming, and will prepare recommendations for harmonization and elimination of duplication. Likewise, the Committee will elaborate guidelines for budgeting processes to facilitate assessment and monitoring of resources benefiting women and men as a result of mainstreaming and to assess whether resources are allocated in a way designed to accelerate the achievement of the goal of gender equality.

35. In 1998, the Committee will review substantive and coordination issues in the area of women and health in preparation of the consideration of this area of concern by the Commission on the Status of Women in 1999. Likewise, the Committee will assess the degree to which implementation of women-specific activities and of mainstreaming, as reflected in the system-wide medium-term plan for the advancement of women 1996-2001, is progressing throughout the United Nations system, with a particular emphasis to be placed on operational activities at the country level.

36. The Committee will also seek the support of other organizations outside the United Nations system in coordinating the implementation of the Beijing Platform

for Action. In this regard, it will convene a workshop jointly with the Women in Development Group of the Development Assistance Committee of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development later this year to share experiences and to develop common strategies in support of implementation of the Platform for Action and mainstreaming of a gender perspective at the national level in multilateral and bilateral development cooperation.

2. Ad hoc inter-agency task forces

(a) Inter-Agency Task Force on Basic Social Services for All

37. UNFPA convened in New York in February 1996 the organizational meeting of the Task Force on Basic Social Services for All. At this meeting, with representation from 18 organizations of the United Nations system, the Task Force agreed on its terms of reference and work plan. It established two new working groups - on Primary Health Care with WHO and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) as joint lead agencies, and on Basic Education with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) as the lead agency. It decided to maintain three working groups from the earlier inter-agency task force for follow-up to the International Conference on Population and Development, namely those on Reproductive Health with the World Health Organization (WHO) as the lead agency, on International Migration with ILO as the lead agency, and on a Common Approach to National Capacity-Building in Tracking Child and Maternal Mortality with UNICEF as the lead agency. The Task Force also agreed to take into account in its work programme the following cross-cutting dimensions: selection/use of indicators; gender perspective; resource mobilization; policy; targeting of specific groups, including those in post-crisis situations; and involvement of civil society.

38. Two subsequent meetings of the Task Force were held to consider progress and to finalize its work. At the suggestion of several resident coordinators and recognizing the perceived need at the country level, the Task Force considered that it was essential to identify appropriate indicators for measuring progress in reaching conference goals as well as for monitoring programme effectiveness in relevant sectors. It stressed the need for a common data system to be used consistently by all United Nations organizations. It was also stressed that the "guidelines" should be focused and concise and that attention should be paid to modalities for building country capacity in the basic social services. The Task Force also sought to formulate its outputs in such a way that these could be readily used in preparing country strategy notes and common country assessments.

39. The Task Force produced five end products: (a) guidelines on sectoral issues for the United Nations resident coordinator system; (b) a wall-chart with indicators for social services, delineating where countries are currently and where they need to be in terms of the goals agreed to at the recent United Nations global conferences; (c) a report on best practices/lessons learned in donor collaboration in assistance to the social sector focusing on three country case studies in Bangladesh, Kenya and Peru; (d) a pocket-card on advocacy for basic social services; and (e) a compendium of conventions and treaties pertaining to the social sector. It is envisaged that the data of the wall-

chart will be updated periodically to enable countries to monitor their progress towards the achievement of conference goals. All products of the Task Force are being disseminated widely and will be made available electronically via the Internet and where feasible on CD-ROM.

40. The Task Force agreed that the use of its end products would be promoted in the day-to-day work of the United Nations resident coordinators and field staff. Training in the use of the guidelines would also be undertaken, and the Turin Centre would be requested to develop a training module for resident coordinators. Other members of the Task Force have been encouraged to include training on the guidelines in their regular training programmes.

41. The Task Force has emphasized the importance of obtaining feedback from the field on the usage and usefulness of these products. It recommended that priority should be given to establishing development partnerships at the country level with non-governmental organizations, the private sector and civil society. In order to rationalize reporting requirements the Task Force suggested that consideration should be given to the preparation of one report per key area by the lead agency in that area. This approach could also significantly reduce the reporting burden on countries.

42. One of the most important achievements of the Task Force has been in mobilizing inter-agency collaboration for producing guidelines in specific areas related to the basic social services. In particular, efforts have been made to ensure that those guidelines are user-friendly, short, clear and concise so that they may be easily and readily used by the United Nations resident coordinators and field staff in their day-to-day work. Another notable success of the work of the Task Force is the inter-agency consensus achieved through its work on the importance of having a set of common indicators, data-sharing and the joint collection of data.

(b) Inter-Agency Task Force on Employment and Sustainable Livelihoods

43. The first organizational meeting of the Task Force on Employment and Sustainable Livelihoods, which ILO convened in Geneva in January 1996, agreed on its terms of reference and a work plan that would focus on a set of country reviews. It agreed to address the following three specific topics from a global perspective: (a) the impact of technology on employment; (b) the evolving concept of sustainable livelihoods; and (c) the need for improved indicators of employment and sustainable livelihoods. Three further meetings were held in 1996 and one in 1997. Country-level reviews and seminars were completed in six countries - Chile, Hungary, Morocco, Mozambique, Nepal and Zambia.

44. As planned, the Task Force produced a synthesis report for use by the resident coordinator system, summarizing lessons of experience at the country level and across countries with a view to suggesting ways of improving inter-agency collaboration in the future and providing a clear understanding of the different ingredients that work for the promotion of employment and sustainable livelihoods in specific situations and of the necessary indicators for monitoring progress in these areas. The synthesis report was based on a number of country reviews that addressed factors related to employment and

sustainable livelihoods and addressed as well other resources of the agencies involved.

45. The country reviews built on existing work previously undertaken by the organizations of the United Nations system and by the national authorities and local research institutions. They provided a comprehensive diagnosis of the country situation and a suggested plan of action to address the problems and constraints that the country faced. They also provided practical guidance for policy reform, proposals for technical assistance and guidance to the resident coordinator system.

46. In each case, following the preparation of the report, an inter-agency meeting at the national level was held to discuss the findings and proposals of the report. This was followed by a one-day national workshop that disseminated the results of the exercise, sought to achieve some consensus on the recommendations derived from the review, and charted areas of future support of the United Nations system. The workshops brought together government policy makers, representatives of United Nations agencies and civil society, representatives of workers and employers, members of national research institutions, and representatives of the media and the donor community. In its synthesis report, the Task Force proposed that an interregional seminar should be convened where representatives of the countries reviewed could discuss the report of the Task Force.

47. The main finding from the analysis of the issues in the countries reviewed was that significant reductions in unemployment and poverty would foremost require a strong and effective commitment of the Government. A strategy for employment and sustainable livelihoods must be formulated with the widest possible consensus of the representatives of civil society, and workers' and employers' organizations. Achieving continued economic growth of the type that made good use of the assets that the poor own, i.e. labour, investing in human capital, removing distortions that discriminate against the poor and the unemployed, and targeting interventions towards the vulnerable and the extremely poor were found to be the proven ways of promoting employment and sustainable livelihoods. The analysis also found that market reforms, while essential for achieving sustainable employment growth and poverty alleviation, were not enough. They needed to be supplemented by policies and programmes designed to strengthen the capacity of key groups, including the poor, to respond adequately to new opportunities.

48. The country reviews confirmed the positive relationship expected between growth of output and expansion of employment. They also showed that the quality of employment was often unsatisfactory where low levels of social protection and limited respect for workers' rights persisted. Women continued to face discrimination in terms of employment and wages, as well as in education; minority groups also often faced discrimination; and child labour was a widespread problem. Overcoming unemployment, underemployment and poverty required sustained labour-intensive growth. In turn this requires macroeconomic stability, sectoral policies that have relatively higher potential for job creation, building up labour market institutions, and good quality training, as well as targeted programmes to address the problems of special groups. In

addition, the review determined that comprehensive efforts were needed to combat gender discrimination and child labour.

49. According to the review, action would also need to be undertaken in a number of key areas at the national and international levels. At the national level, such actions would include devising a sound macroeconomic policy framework, promoting jobs through employment-intensive sectoral policies, enterprise creation, and targeted employment programmes for the most vulnerable groups. This would further involve, for instance, a review of policies that have a major influence on achieving sustainable livelihoods in rural areas and undertaking a review of agricultural policies, as well as promoting the urban informal sector and upgrading its conditions of work and productivity. The technical competence of the labour force must be improved and managerial capacity further developed. Targeted programmes would need to be evaluated and the most successful expanded. At the international level, it was judged important that the world trading system remain as open as possible and that progress towards debt reduction in countries where macroeconomic policies are in line with economic fundamentals be given further impetus. Under current trends in global interdependence, international governance would require reaching a global compact on means to enhance job creation at the national level through orderly management of financial and trade flows and through promotion of democratic systems and respect for fundamental labour standards.

50. Apart from its concentration on country-level action for conference follow-up, the Task Force highlighted issues of global concern that remain challenges for the United Nations system, including a fuller appreciation of the significance of globalization and technological change for employment, the role of full employment as the means to promote sustainable livelihoods, and the need for indicators that can more adequately reflect the notions of employment, underemployment and sustainable livelihoods.

(c) Inter-Agency Task Force on the Enabling Environment for Economic and Social Development

51. The World Bank convened the first organizational meeting of the Task Force in Washington, D.C., with wide representation from United Nations organizations. The Task Force decided to prepare a synthesis of best practices or lessons learned with the aim of clarifying the elements of an enabling environment for economic and social development and of establishing mechanisms for improving inter-agency coordination in support of such an environment. The Task Force established two sub-groups to address the major issues within its purview. The first, on Capacity Development for Governance, was chaired by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the second, on Macroeconomic and Social Framework, was chaired by the World Bank itself.

52. The primary responsibilities of the sub-group on Macroeconomic and Social Framework were to clarify the key elements of the macroeconomic and social framework, to develop country case studies of inter-agency coordination in support of such a framework, and to derive lessons learned and guidance for future inter-agency coordination based on these country experiences. The objective of the case studies was to examine the role of the United Nations system agencies in assisting countries to create an appropriate macroeconomic

and social framework, which would entail exploring instances where the successful development of an enabling environment had been enhanced through United Nations system agency support and inter-agency coordination, or where the lack of such coordination proved to be detrimental.

53. The countries selected for the case studies were chosen from those actively pursuing a reform agenda during the period under study, countries with active United Nations system involvement, and those whose national development situation would enable multiple perspectives to be addressed. The country case studies were completed in April of this year, and the final report on the work of the sub-group is expected to be completed by the end of June.

54. The sub-group on Capacity Development for Governance agreed to prepare a consolidated report, based on studies to be undertaken by its members, concerning their best practices in supporting capacity development in the area of governance. The case studies were to be based on the comparative advantage and mandate of each agency. It was also agreed that the framework for governance contained in the Copenhagen Declaration on Social Development and Programme of Action of the World Summit for Social Development would serve as the definition and overall guidance for the members of the sub-group. The sub-group further emphasized that the purpose of undertaking these studies was to draw upon each agency's experience and lessons learned as a resource for identifying and establishing more effective inter-agency partnerships in support of national programmes for sustainable capacity development and sound governance. In reviewing each agency's approach to supporting capacity development in the area of governance and their experiences, agencies agreed that special attention would be given to two cross-cutting issues, namely, (a) ensuring the sustainability of capacity-development aspects of governance and (b) the role of agencies in programme design and implementation, in order to be able to compare common issues and conclusions. A plenary meeting of the sub-group was convened in March 1997 to finalize the consolidated report. It is envisaged that the Task Force will complete its work in the early part of the summer.

3. Follow-up to the inter-agency task forces

55. At its first regular session for 1997, ACC decided to undertake a comprehensive assessment of overall progress in promoting the coordinated follow-up to conferences. As part of this review, ACC agreed to assess: (a) the effective utilization of the end products, including indicators, of the task forces; (b) the regular updating and feedback on follow-up activities at the country level and on attainment of goals established by the conferences; (c) the streamlining of reporting requirements and mechanisms, building on existing reporting and information arrangements, and on common country assessments and on the concept of task managers and lead organizations; and (d) experience gained and lessons learned from the use of flexible mechanisms such as the task forces for carrying out specific tasks under ACC.

56. In this context, ACC decided to hold a workshop in early September 1997, the main purposes of which are (a) to review the outputs of the Inter-Agency Task Forces and other bodies to ensure coherence and interlinkages among them,

particularly regarding guidance for the resident coordinator system, (b) to develop proposals for submission through CCPOQ to ACC at its second regular session for 1997 on the continued coordination and sustainability of the follow-up to the international conferences, and (c) to address the need for further simplification and streamlining of meeting and reporting requirements. The participation of the workshop should include the chairpersons of the inter-agency task forces and of the relevant ACC subsidiary mechanisms (Inter-Agency Committee on Sustainable Development, CCPOQ, Inter-Agency Committee on Women and Gender Equality, ACC Subcommittee on Statistical Activities, etc.), selected lead agencies and selected resident coordinators.

C. World Food Summit

57. ACC, at its first regular session for 1997, decided on the mechanism for inter-agency follow-up to the World Food Summit. Under the arrangements agreed upon, the resident coordinator system would be encouraged to constitute at the country level thematic groups covering food security and related issues. At headquarters level, FAO and IFAD would jointly assume responsibility for running a network to backstop the country-level groups and to collect, analyse and disseminate selected country experiences, with reporting to ACC to be done, as appropriate, through CCPOQ and/or the Inter-Agency Committee on Sustainable Development and results to be made available to other relevant mechanisms within or outside the ACC machinery.

D. United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II)

58. With regard to the follow-up to Habitat II, ACC, at its first regular session for 1997, decided that the arrangements should focus on supporting country-level action and coordination and should involve the development of guidelines to orient the resident coordinator system in establishing country-level thematic groups and strengthening implementation and monitoring at the national and local level.

IV. PROGRESS AT THE COUNTRY LEVEL

A. Background

59. Since the establishment of the three ACC inter-agency task forces in October 1995, the Administrator of UNDP has been communicating with all resident representatives/resident coordinators concerning the integrated follow-up to the recent global conferences. He has urged them to use the overall framework of the ACC inter-agency task forces and the Inter-Agency Committee on Women and Gender Equality as a broad guide in organizing country follow-up. It was suggested that they should take the lead, in close collaboration with agency representatives, in establishing thematic groups that would draw on, but not necessarily be identical to, the headquarters task forces and should reflect the particular country situation, priorities and needs. These groups are to involve fully national and local authorities and NGOs, as well as the concerned United Nations system partners.

60. Following the communication from the Administrator, resident coordinators have been organizing country-level follow-up action. Progress has been made in all regions where resident coordinators have organized or are in the process of establishing thematic groups involving, as appropriate, national and local authorities, NGOs, and concerned United Nations organizations. The following provides a brief summary of the emerging trends at the country level in the follow-up activities. This preliminary assessment was based on the information provided in the 1996 annual reports of resident coordinators on progress in 100 countries.

B. Overview

61. In general, resident coordinators have initiated the establishment of thematic groups and inter-agency joint programmes, and projects are being launched that are closely related to the effective implementation of the outcomes of the recent global conferences. In all cases, their initiatives have been carried out in full consultation with the host Governments, taking into consideration the special domestic circumstances, national priorities and needs. Efforts have been made at the same time to promote wider participation of, as appropriate, national and local authorities, concerned United Nations organizations, and NGOs.

62. Notwithstanding the unique character of thematic groups or programmes in each country, a few similarities can be seen across regions, in the arrangements made for a thematic approach. The establishment of the thematic group on the issue of HIV/AIDS is one of them. In adopting the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development, Governments committed themselves to provide all necessary means to reduce the spread and the rate of transmission of the HIV/AIDS infection. According to the 1996 annual reports, approximately 90 per cent of the resident coordinators have reported the establishment of the thematic groups/joint programmes on HIV/AIDS. The rate is particularly good in the Latin America and the Caribbean region.

63. Another prevalent theme is poverty alleviation. One group of United Nations country teams has taken the approach of establishing a thematic group on poverty alleviation. Another set of country teams has decided to deal with the issue as a cross-cutting and underlying principle of most of the inter-agency collaboration and did not establish a specific working group or programme to address poverty. Approximately 60 per cent of the United Nations country teams took the second approach. In the Asia and the Pacific region, almost 80 per cent have taken the second approach. It is noteworthy that in Africa only approximately 60 per cent of the resident coordinators have established thematic groups or launched inter-agency activities in the area of poverty alleviation.

64. Advancement of women and mainstreaming of gender is another of the issues most frequently taken up (over 80 per cent of the countries in Africa and in the region of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), 60 to 70 per cent in Latin America and the Caribbean). A large number of countries have also undertaken inter-agency coordination on issues related to basic social services, employment and sustainable livelihoods, and the environment.

65. In general, the 1996 annual reports indicate that the resident coordinators recognize the importance of the inter-agency coordination efforts at the country level, through such mechanisms as thematic groups and joint programmes/projects. Box 2 presents more detailed information on these activities. The richness of inter-agency experience has been fully utilized at the country level for operationalizing demand-driven partnership with Governments, civil society organizations and other development partners.

Box 2. Regional perspective

1. Africa

The most prevalent theme pursued in the countries in this region is the issue of gender mainstreaming/advancement and empowerment of women followed by poverty alleviation. Over 80 per cent of the countries now have inter-agency activities to promote this issue. Approximately 60 per cent of the countries have established thematic groups or launched inter-agency coordination activities in the area of poverty alleviation. The issues related to basic social services are also pursued actively in nearly 60 per cent of the countries. In a little over one third of the countries, various thematic groups and joint programmes/projects have been established in the areas of employment and sustainable livelihoods (including food security); environment; education; and children's human rights/child labour.

2. ESCWA region

The countries in this region have been very active in promoting inter-agency collaboration to promote the national implementation of major themes of global conferences. Over 80 per cent of the countries have established thematic working groups or launched inter-agency joint activities in the areas of poverty alleviation and the advancement and empowerment of women. The inter-agency collaboration in the area related to employment and sustainable livelihoods (including food security) has been prominent in nearly 70 per cent of the countries. Over 60 per cent of the countries have established thematic groups or inter-agency joint programmes/projects related to the issues of basic social services and environment. In approximately one third of the countries, the United Nations system has launched inter-agency initiatives in the area of education. The United Nations country teams in a few countries have initiated thematic groups or joint programmes/projects on children's human rights/child labour.

3. Asia and the Pacific

As mentioned above, 80 per cent of the countries in the region are dealing with the issue of poverty alleviation as a cross-cutting and underlying principle of most of the inter-agency collaboration and have not

established a separate working group or programme on the subject. However, countries in the region are very active in pursuing issues related to basic social services; employment and sustainable livelihoods (including the issue of food security); and women and gender. Especially for the theme of basic social services, over 70 per cent of the countries have launched inter-agency activities. Inter-agency collaboration has taken place mostly in the form of thematic groups (over 80 per cent) involving a larger number of concerned United Nations organizations, national and local authorities, and non-governmental organizations. Joint activities of the United Nations system have been carried out in about one third of the countries on issues related to environment, education, and children's human rights and child labour.

4. Latin America and the Caribbean

The issues related to basic social services, employment and sustainable livelihoods (including food security), and women and gender have been most frequently taken up (60-70 per cent countries in the region) as themes for inter-agency collaboration in this region. A little more than one third of the countries have initiated activities related to the issues of environment and education. The subject of children's human rights and child labour has been pursued by the United Nations system in a little less than one third of the countries.

5. Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States

In this region, 80 per cent of the countries have cooperative activities for HIV/AIDS prevention. About 40 per cent of the countries have initiated activities in the areas of poverty alleviation and employment and sustainable livelihoods. About one third of the countries have launched inter-agency initiatives on basic social services and one fourth of them initiated activities on issues of women and gender. Resident coordinators have listed various obstacles that are hampering progress, such as absence of a government agency responsible for issues of concern, the aftermath of internal conflicts, and severe economic collapse after the disintegration of the former Soviet Union. The implementation of drastic structural adjustment programmes that have forced severe cuts in public expenditure in the social sectors was also pointed out as an important factor in this regard.

C. Complementarity with other inter-agency initiatives

66. In many countries, efforts for increased use of thematic working groups and a more consultative approach to advance the implementation of the goals and the commitments of the recent global conferences have been proceeding in conjunction with already existing inter-agency collaboration mechanisms such as the country strategy note. The preparation of and the effort for the effective implementation of the country strategy note are reported to have helped in identifying the country's priority areas, to have led to closer inter-agency consultations to ensure the efficient application of United Nations resources in those priority areas, and thus in many cases to have served to strengthen the functioning of inter-agency thematic working groups.

V. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

67. Promoting sustained and coordinated follow-up to the broad spectrum of United Nations conferences should remain a main objective of the system, in particular at the field level. In this regard, the Council may wish to take into consideration at its 1998 substantive session the results of the aforementioned comprehensive review of ACC, which is to be carried out at its second regular session for 1997, with a view to ensuring the promotion of the integrated and coordinated follow-up to the United Nations global conferences.

68. The Council may wish to encourage that, in reporting on the outcome of ACC comprehensive review of coordinated follow-up to conferences, a particular focus be placed on progress in ensuring coordination in follow-up to conferences in the area of statistics and indicators, taking into account the work done by the Statistical Commission.

69. Within the framework of the Council's 1995 agreed conclusions on a coordinated follow-up to international conferences, the Council could consider asking the Secretariat, in cooperation with organizations of the United Nations system and drawing upon the work of relevant inter-agency mechanisms, as well as the resident coordinator system, to report periodically on the progress achieved in promoting an integrated approach, under the coordination item of its general segment. The Council could continue to guide the work of its functional commissions in order to ensure better harmonization of their work.

70. The Council could consider recommending that its subsidiary bodies and other parts of the United Nations system use the Assembly's guidance when examining cross-cutting themes of conferences. The Council could invite its functional commissions, in monitoring goals and targets of international conferences, to make use of the work undertaken for the follow-up to the Children's Summit, building also on the work on indicators, goals and targets of the Task Force on Basic Social Services For All.

71. At the same time, the Council may wish to call on all relevant organizations of the United Nations system to further integrate the results of the major international conferences in the economic, social and related fields into their programmes of work and to contribute relevant information, analyses and assessments in support of the Council's own thematic reviews. The Council may also wish to call upon all the organizations of the United Nations system to continue to give priority attention to the provision of effective support, including by full utilization and implementation of outputs of the task forces, to the resident coordinators and the United Nations system country teams working with Governments, civil society organizations, and others in pursuit of the goals and objectives agreed at the United Nations conferences.

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SOCIAL QUESTIONS

Progress report on the implementation process of the education for all objectives

Report of the Secretary-General and of the Director-General of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

The present report has been prepared pursuant to General Assembly resolution 50/143 of 21 December 1995. As requested by the Assembly, the report includes the conclusions and recommendations of the mid-decade meeting of the International Consultative Forum on Education for All, held at Amman from 16 to 19 June 1996 (see annex).

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PROGRESS REPORT ON THE IMPLEMENTATION PROCESS OF THE EDUCATION FOR ALL OBJECTIVES

Report of the Secretary-General and of the Director-General of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

Introduction

"Education is empowerment. It is the key to establishing and reinforcing democracy, to development which is both sustainable and humane and to peace founded upon mutual respect and social justice. Indeed, in a world in which creativity and knowledge play an ever greater role, the right to education is nothing less that the right to participate in the life of the modern world."

1. This opening paragraph of the Amman Affirmation, the final communiqué of the mid-decade meeting of the International Consultative Forum on Education for All, adopted at Amman on 19 June 1996, emphasizes why education for all has become a major concern shared by countries around the world and a priority for the United Nations, its specialized agencies and their partners.

2. The Amman meeting was the third global meeting of the Education for All Forum since it was established, to follow up the World Conference on Education for All: Meeting Basic Learning Needs, held in Jomtien, Thailand from 5 to 9 March 1990. The Jomtien Conference, a major event during the International Literacy Year, adopted the World Declaration on Education for All and approved a Framework for Action to Meet Basic Learning Needs.[1] These two texts have guided countries and the international community in their efforts through the 1990s to expand and improve basic education which covers a range of activities that aim to meet the basic learning needs of individuals. The Education for All Forum secretariat is based at the headquarters of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in Paris. Its programme is defined by an international steering committee, and its operational funding is provided by a consortium of multilateral and bilateral organizations.

3. During 1995 and 1996, the Education for All Forum coordinated the mid-decade review of progress towards education for all, a worldwide exercise that called upon all countries to examine and report on their achievements and shortfalls in relation to their own education for all goals and plans. The global review also drew information from the annual statistical reports submitted to UNESCO, some 20 country case studies, a survey of the conditions of schools in a cross-section of the least developed countries, a survey of the major donor organizations and reports submitted by major groupings of non-governmental organizations concerned with basic education.

4. Information collected during the mid-decade review gave a general but incomplete picture of progress and shortfalls in the development of basic education since the Jomtien Conference. The present report contains a few selected, salient points from the findings of the review expressed in general terms, which do not take account of inter- and intra-country disparities and

exceptions. The Amman Affirmation, which includes more information and summarizes the Forum's conclusions and recommendations, is annexed to the present report.

Progress in the 1990s

5. Both the number and the proportion of literate adults continued to grow during the first half of the current decade, so that by 1995 they constituted 77 per cent of the adult population 15 years of age and older. The proportion of women who are literate increased slightly, from 68.7 per cent in 1990 to 71.2 per cent in 1995. During the same period, the absolute number of illiterate adults stayed at about 885 million, but within that total, the number of illiterate women grew by 4 million, so there are now nearly two illiterate women for every illiterate man in the world.

6. Gains in the expansion of primary schooling give the grounds for expecting a continuing growth in the number and proportion of literate adults. All of the major developing regions of the world registered significant increases in primary school enrolments, with the combined total reaching some 545 million in 1995, representing an increase of nearly 50 million in five years, double the pace of expansion during the 1980s. Since enrolment rates increased faster than population growth, the net enrolment ratios continued to rise in all developing regions. Some four out of five children in the 6 to 11 age-group were enrolled in school by mid-decade, and the absolute number of children in this age-group who were not enrolled is estimated to have dropped from 128 million in 1990 to 110 million in 1995.

7. Several other promising signs for the future emerged from the mid-decade review of the education for all. Most developing countries reported having taken steps since 1990 to give more priority to the expansion and improvement of the provision of basic education, that includes the quality of primary education, reducing urban-rural and gender disparities, and reducing drop-out rates. There appears also to have been some expansion of early childhood development programmes, which are estimated to reach some 450 million children in the developing regions, or about one out of five children in the three to six age-group.

Shortfalls, new and continuing challenges

8. The progress towards the education for all goals was found to be uneven both within and between countries, as well as in respect to the several target dimensions identified in the Framework for Action to Meet Basic Learning Needs, which was adopted by the Jomtien Conference and continues to serve as the main reference instrument for the international community. The Amman Forum has reiterated the stress given at the Jomtien Conference to closing the gender gap in education, but found that the progress towards this goal has been excruciatingly slow and, therefore, much more must be done in this area. The Forum also underlines that the expanded vision of basic education espoused at Jomtien has often been reduced to a simple emphasis upon putting more children into school: an essential step, but only one of many measures needed to achieve

education for all. In this connection, the Forum mentions the relative lack of attention and resources given to out-of-school literacy and other basic education programmes for young people and adults, and notes that the early childhood care and development, while receiving increased attention, nonetheless remains seriously underdeveloped and undersupported in many countries.

9. In its general assessment of progress so far, the Consultative Forum has identified emerging and continuing challenges that countries need to respond to in their efforts to provide basic education for all. These are summarized succinctly in the Amman Affirmation, annexed to the present report. In its final session, the Forum stressed the need to accelerate progress towards the education for all and called on the Governments to set firm targets and timetables for achieving those targets.

Conclusion

10. The Secretary-General of the United Nations and the Director-General of UNESCO would like to assure that the commitment to education for all made by the international community at the beginning of the present decade is being vigorously pursued by the Governments around the world with the support of the organizations and agencies of the United Nations system and their partners. Among these partners are numerous non-governmental and other community organizations, research institutions, print and audio-visual media, private enterprises, as well as bilateral and multilateral development assistance programmes. This impressive mobilization of partners and the progress achieved so far are a strong encouragement for continuing and increasing efforts at all levels to ensure that the basic learning needs of people of all ages and in all countries are effectively met. The Amman Forum, at its mid-decade meeting, has reaffirmed the necessity and the possibility of achieving the education for all. It is now up to the Member States, individually and collectively, to see this historical commitment through to its fulfilment.

Notes

[1] See Final Report of the World Conference on Education for All: Meeting Basic Learning Needs, Jomtien, Thailand, 5-9 March 1990, Inter-Agency Commission for the World Conference on Education for All, New York, 1990.

Annex

[Original: Arabic, Chinese, English, French and Spanish]

The Amman Affirmation, adopted at the mid-decade meeting of the International Consultative Forum on Education for All, held at Amman, from 16 to 19 June 1996

Education is empowerment. It is the key to establishing and reinforcing democracy, to development which is both sustainable and humane and to peace founded upon mutual respect and social justice. Indeed, in a world in which creativity and knowledge play an ever greater role, the right to education is nothing less than the right to participate in the life of the modern world.

Aware of the power and potential of education, the international community committed itself at the World Conference on Education for All held in Jomtien, Thailand, in March 1990, to meet the basic learning needs of every individual. In major conferences since Jomtien, the nations of the world have repeatedly endorsed the central importance of basic education in all aspects of the development process: preserving the environment, managing population growth, combating poverty, promoting social development and creating equality between the sexes. We have now met in Amman, Jordan, at the gracious invitation of His Majesty King Hussein Bin Talal, to review progress towards the goals set in Jomtien and, of even greater importance, to find ways of overcoming persistent problems and confronting new challenges in order to achieve education for all.

Gains achieved

In the six years since the adoption of the World Declaration on Education for All, there has been significant progress in basic education, not in all countries nor as much as had been hoped, but progress that is nonetheless real. Primary school enrolment has increased, an estimated 50 million more children are enrolled today than in 1990. The number of out-of-school children, which had grown inexorably for decades, is also beginning to decline. There are today 20 million fewer out-of-school children of primary-school age than at the start of the decade. This progress is the result of concerted efforts by Governments and peoples to extend educational opportunities. New partnerships have emerged, new resources have been tapped and new energies and ideas have been devoted to making education for all a reality.

Accompanying these quantitative gains has been a growing emphasis on the quality of education. Without educational content relevant to current needs, without preparation in the learning skills and new knowledge required for the future, and without efforts to improve learning achievement, access may neither serve the purposes intended nor provide the benefits expected. Fortunately, serious reflection, more rigorous planning and a spirit of innovation have prepared the ground in many countries for important educational advances in the years ahead.

We acknowledge the forces of progress at work in all parts of the world: the new dynamism with which Africa is struggling, in difficult circumstances, to reverse the negative trends of the last 10 years; the valiant efforts of South Asia to bring basic education to hundreds of millions of people; the increasing political support being given to education for all in the Arab States, which is increasingly perceived as the best preparation for meeting the challenges and uncertainties of the future; and the measures taken in other regions of the world to protect, sustain and enhance the gains that have been made since the Jomtien Conference.

Shortfalls

Yet, if the achievements of the last six years give reason for optimism, they provide no room for complacency. Continued progress requires even more forceful and concerted action, based on good information, sound research and careful analysis and aimed at achieving clearly specified results.

No point was more stressed in Jomtien than the urgent need to close the gender gap in education, both as a matter of simple equity and as the most effective means for responding to demographic pressures and promoting development. Yet, progress towards this goal has been excruciatingly slow; much more must be done.

The expanded vision of basic education espoused in Jomtien has often been reduced to a simple emphasis upon putting more children into school: an essential step, but only one of many measures needed to achieve education for all.

Early childhood care and development, with its enormous potential and distinctive role in promoting the active learning capacities and the overall well-being and development of children, while receiving greatly increased attention, nonetheless remains seriously underdeveloped and undersupported in many countries.

This lack of support applies as well to out-of-school literacy and education programmes for adolescents and adults. There are some 900 million adult illiterates in the world, nearly two thirds of them women. In all societies, the best predictor of the learning achievement of children is the education and literacy level of their parents. Investments in adult education and literacy are, thus, investments in the education of entire families.

There has also been a tendency to focus on basic education without recognizing its essential links to secondary and higher education, as well as to teacher training and the development of technical and vocational skills. The World Declaration on Education for All was intended to empower, not to limit - to propose minimums, but not to set ceilings.

The road ahead

As we look to the end of the century and beyond, the leadership in each country must assume the responsibility for accelerating progress towards education for all, setting firm targets and timetables for achieving them.

International agencies and donors must also play their full role as partners in the education for all movement, matching national efforts with significantly increased international support, improved coordination and greater responsiveness to country priorities.

All education for all partners must learn how to mobilize new resources as well as how to use existing resources more effectively. In the quest for education for all, enhanced political will, greater financial and material resources and improved management are all essential.

Emerging challenges

In the light of the developments of the past six years, it has become essential to re-examine goals and add new areas and means of action to those set forth in the Jomtien vision:

- Given the trend towards more open societies and global economies, we must emphasize the forms of learning and critical thinking that enable individuals to understand changing environments, create new knowledge and shape their own destinies. We must respond to new challenges by promoting learning in all aspects of life, through all the institutions of society, in effect, creating environments in which living is learning.

- Given the growing recognition and reality of multicultural and diverse societies, we must respond by including local content as well as cross-cultural learning in basic education and by acknowledging the essential role of the mother tongue for initial instruction.

- Given escalating violence caused by growing ethnic tensions and other sources of conflict, we must respond by ensuring that education reinforces mutual respect, social cohesion and democratic governance; we must learn how to use education to prevent conflict and, where crises do occur, ensure that education is among the first responses, thereby contributing to hope, stability and the healing of the wounds of conflict.

- Given debt burdens, restrictions on social expenditures and continuing wasteful expenditure on weapons of war, we must respond with measures to reduce debt burdens, including the transformation of liabilities into assets through debt swaps, policies that promote investments in a nation's people and future, and reforms to the international economic system that give poor countries a chance to earn their way in the world.

- Given rapidly growing numbers of youth at risk, often alienated from society and facing unemployment, we must seek ways to make education more responsive, both to the immediate realities facing these youth, as well as to the changing realities of a world in which basic learning skills are ever more important.

Continuing challenges

Even as we focus our attention on these new realities and challenges, we must persist in our efforts to meet the goals set forth in the World Declaration on Education for All:

- The priority of priorities must continue to be the education of women and girls. Successful approaches and programmes must be identified in order that they may be replicated and expanded. There can be no enduring success in basic education until the gender gap is closed.

- The training, status and motivation of teachers continues to be at the very core of educational concerns. While we must make better and wider use of technology and media, they can complement, but never replace the essential role of the teacher as the organizer of the instructional process and as a guide and example to the young.

- The full vision of education for all, that of a learning society, recognizes the role of parents, families and communities as the child's first teachers. Both learning and teaching begin at birth and continue throughout life, as individuals work, live and communicate ideas and values by word and example.

- Education for all can only be achieved through a broad partnership united by a shared purpose. It is essential to sustain the spirit of partnership and to broaden it to include all elements of society: parliaments, religious bodies, voluntary and community groups, the business sector, the media and others. Education for all was founded on a faith in partnerships and a belief that, in a shrinking world, we are destined to share fully in the successes as well as the setbacks of other peoples and countries. In the quest to achieve education for all, it is essential that we sustain and enhance this spirit of solidarity.

- The efficient and effective use of resources continues to be essential to the progress of education for all. We must seek more efficient management of education systems, make more effective use of partnerships, draw more systematically upon research and experimentation, and develop reliable information and assessment systems.

- The right to education has been powerfully reaffirmed by the near-universal ratification of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. Yet, there are still over 100 million children without access to education. We must respond urgently with new approaches and strategies capable of bringing quality education within the reach of all, including the poor, the remote and those with special educational needs. This calls for a comprehensive effort tailored to the needs of specific populations and based upon the best available expertise and technology.

Renewing the pledge

Six years ago, at Jomtien, the international community agreed upon the necessity and the possibility of achieving education for all. Today, we, the participants in the mid-decade review of education for all, reflecting on the experience and knowledge gained during the intervening years, reaffirm that necessity and possibility and rededicate ourselves to the essential task of bringing the benefits of education to all.

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COORDINATION, PROGRAMME AND OTHER QUESTIONS: COORDINATION OF THE ACTIVITIES OF ORGANIZATIONS OF THE UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM IN THE FIELD OF ENERGY

Possibilities of strengthening the coordination of the organizations and bodies of the United Nations system in the field of energy within the framework of the Administrative Committee on Coordination

Report of the Secretary-General

CONTENTS

		Paragraphs	Page
I.	INTRODUCTION	1 - 3	3
II.	ENERGY AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT	4 - 10	4
III.	ACTIVITIES OF THE UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM IN THE FIELD OF ENERGY	11 - 22	5

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CONTENTS (continued)

		Paragraphs	Page
	A. Mandates and policies	11 - 13	5
	B. Overview of programmes and activities	14 - 17	6
	C. Assessment of the linkage between energy activities within the United Nations system and sustainable development	18 - 22	7
IV.	STRENGTHENING COOPERATION IN AND COORDINATION OF ACTIVITIES IN THE FIELD OF ENERGY	23 - 31	9
V.	RECOMMENDATIONS AND PROPOSALS FOR ENHANCING THE CAPABILITY OF THE UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM IN THE FIELD OF ENERGY FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT	32 - 36	11
VI.	OPTIONS FOR HIGH-LEVEL DISCUSSION ON ENERGY	37 - 42	12

I. INTRODUCTION

1. The Committee on New and Renewable Sources of Energy and on Energy for Development, at its second session (12-23 February 1996), requested the Secretary-General to prepare a report on the activities of the United Nations system in the field of energy for consideration by the Committee at its third session in 1998.[1] The Economic and Social Council, when considering the report of the Committee at its substantive session in 1996, requested the Secretary-General to prepare a report, taking into account, as appropriate, the views of the Committee, on the possibilities of strengthening the coordination of the organizations and bodies of the United Nations system in the field of energy within the framework of the Administrative Committee on Coordination, and to submit the report, through the Council, to the General Assembly for consideration at its fifty-second session. The Council further requested the Secretary-General, in consultation with regional commissions and other entities within the United Nations system, to address in the same report the need to enhance the capability of the system in the field of energy for sustainable development and to explore all possible options for a high-level discussion in this context, taking into account the results of the fifth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development (7-25 April 1997) and of the nineteenth special session of the General Assembly (23-27 June 1997).[2]

2. The present report has been prepared in response to that request. It is based on information compiled in-house as well as that provided by the relevant entities within the United Nations system. It draws heavily on the report of the Secretary-General to the fifth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development, entitled "Inventory of ongoing energy-related programmes and activities of entities within the United Nations system, on coordination of such activities and on arrangements needed to foster the linkage between energy and sustainable development within the system",[3] requested by the Commission on at its fourth session, in 1996. The present report benefited from inputs by the entities within the United Nations system concerned with energy; discussions at and the report of the Expert Workshop on fostering the linkage between energy and sustainable development within the international institutions, which was hosted by the Austrian Ministry for the Environment, Youth and Family Affairs and held at Vienna from 22 to 24 January 1997;[4] the report of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) on Energy after Rio: prospects and challenges,[5] as well as the discussions on the subject at the fifth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development (7-25 April 1997). Comments on the outline of the report were also received from members of the Committee on New and Renewable Sources of Energy and on Energy for Development.

3. The report consists of a description of activities, assessments, recommendations and proposals. Section II contains a brief discussion on the relationship between energy and sustainable development. Section III provides an overview of mandates and the activities of the organizations in the field of energy as well as an assessment of the linkage of those activities to sustainable development. Section IV deals with cooperation and coordination of energy activities within the system. Section V presents recommendations and proposals on enhancing the capability of the United Nations system in the field

of energy for sustainable development. Section VI contains options for a high-level discussion on energy.

II. ENERGY AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

4. A more detailed discussion on the topic of energy and sustainable development is contained in the report of the Secretary-General to the Commission on Sustainable Development at its fifth session on energy-related programmes and activities.[3]

5. Energy plays a key role in achieving environmentally sound economic and social objectives that lead to sustainable development, a point which has been underscored by the Commission on Sustainable Development. Agenda 21[6] and other internationally agreed plans of action adopted at major United Nations conferences, as well as relevant conventions, provide a global framework containing goals and objectives for sustainable socio-economic development and specified actions related to energy production, transmission, conversion and use to realize those goals and objectives.

6. The development and use of energy resources and technologies should be realized in a socially acceptable manner. It should be clean and safe, should not exceed the carrying capacity of existing ecosystems and thus should not endanger the quality of life of the present and future generations. The use of scarce resources to meet current energy service requirements should not jeopardize the ability of future generations to meet their needs for the same services.[4] It is critically important that short-term options for the development and use of energy resources be in harmony with those options that, in the longer term, better contribute to sustainable development. The supply of energy should be reliable and secure - at reasonable costs. Access to and therefore adequate availability of energy service is a prerequisite to achieving the socio-economic development required to improve quality of life and satisfy basic human needs. An adequate supply of energy services is urgently needed in many developing countries, particularly in the least developed countries, remote rural areas and small island developing States, where more than two billion people have little or no access to commercial energy services.[1]

7. The current policies for and patterns of production, conversion, distribution and use of energy are, in general, unsustainable, characterized as they are by a strong emphasis on energy supply rather than demand, including demand-side management, and lack due regard to the social, economic and environmental consequences of such approaches. As was affirmed by the Commission on Sustainable Development, advances towards sustainable energy use are taking place. The Commission also underscored that it is necessary to ensure international cooperation for promoting energy conservation and the improvement of energy efficiency.[7]

8. The development and use of energy are highly capital-intensive activities. Estimates of capital investment requirements for the development and use of energy resources in developing countries, while not exhaustive, are nevertheless enormous. Substantial investments will also be required to replace ageing plants to improve efficiency and to reduce environmental impacts of the

development and use of energy, in particular, fossil fuels. There are also many other competing requirements for financial resources.[3]

9. Current energy prices favour the development and use of conventional energy sources over renewable ones. At the same time, current practices in fuel pricing do not encourage energy efficiency. In most cases there is little or no regard for the external social and environmental costs of energy supply. Subsidies in the energy sector for conventional energy sources and nuclear power tend to hamper widespread development and application of renewable energy sources. Policy changes leading to the full internalization of environmental costs in prices through the use of economic and fiscal instruments and to the removal of permanent subsidies are required in order to establish an enabling policy environment and to achieve a sustainable energy future.[3]

10. It is evident that the challenges of achieving a sustainable energy future are enormous and that they require the contribution of all concerned parties. It is imperative that all of those concerned - governments, the international community, the private sector and non-governmental organizations - develop strategies that include increased efficiency in energy production, transmission, distribution and, in particular, energy end-use; a shift towards environmentally sound energy sources and technologies, including expanded use of renewable sources of energy; and a shift towards environmentally sound, safe and cost-effective production, conversion and use of depletable sources of energy, making full use of advances in technology in those areas. All concerned parties should pursue the promotion, development and implementation of policies and programmes, as appropriate, designed to ensure that such strategies achieve the desired goals.

III. ACTIVITIES OF THE UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM IN THE FIELD OF ENERGY

A. Mandates and policies

11. The policies and programmes of the entities within the United Nations system in the energy field form an integral part of the overall objectives of the United Nations organization. The United Nations Conference on New and Renewable Sources of Energy, held at Nairobi in 1981, provided explicit energy-related policies and programmes. The United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, held at Rio de Janeiro in 1992, also discussed energy and concluded that energy was essential to economic and social development and improved quality of life. The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change relates its implementation to the energy policies of the parties to the Convention. In the subsequent major conferences, energy received attention as one of the key factors for furthering sustainable development. The United Nations Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, held in Barbados in 1994, adopted the Declaration of Barbados and the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, which includes a chapter on energy resources that identifies issues, problems and constraints facing the States and recommends ways and means of ensuring adequate, environmentally sound energy supplies for meeting their social and economic development objectives.

12. Policy discussions on energy take place in various intergovernmental bodies. The Committee on New and Renewable Sources of Energy and on Energy for Development addresses a wide range of issues on energy and sustainable development, including the development of energy resources in developing countries, the development and use of renewable sources of energy, energy efficiency improvement, environmentally sound development and use of fossil fuels, the development and implementation of rural energy policies, energy and transportation and coordination of energy activities within the United Nations system. For its deliberations, it is provided with in-depth reports by the Secretary-General. The Committee reports to the Economic and Social Council.

13. General discussions on energy also take place among other intergovernmental bodies, such as the Commission on Sustainable Development, the Governing Council of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) (in relation to energy and environment issues), the General Conference of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) (in relation to nuclear energy and related environmental issues), the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (in relation to the emission of greenhouse gases), the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, the Executive Board of UNDP and the United Nations Population Fund (energy for sustainable human development) and the Statistical Commission (energy statistics). The World Bank's energy activities are based on the objectives approved by the Bank's Board of Executive Directors. The Global Environment Facility (GEF) has produced an operational strategy. Policy discussions on energy also take place in the regional commissions, which have standing committees on energy or on energy and natural resources. The High-level Advisory Board on Sustainable Development addressed energy policy issues in its report to the fifth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development entitled "Critical issues and policies for sustainable development: energy, transport and water".[8]

B. Overview of programmes and activities

14. A wide range of activities has been reported, reflecting, as they do, the mandates, policies and programmes of the respective entities. For more details see the annex to the report of the Secretary-General to the Commission on Sustainable Development entitled 'Inventory of ongoing energy-related programmes and activities of entities within the United Nations system, on coordination of such activities and on arrangements needed to foster the linkage between energy and sustainable development within the system'.[3] The means of implementing the programmes and activities have varied widely and have, on the whole, involved the preparation of studies and reports; technical assistance, including advisory services by experts in specific fields; the organization of training workshops, seminars, meetings and conferences; institution- and capacity-building for assessment of resources, planning, analysis and data management, policy formulation and implementation; and provision of financial assistance. The magnitude of the financial resources allocated to each project varies widely, from millions of dollars for financial assistance projects to a few hundred dollars for specific studies or expert services. The World Bank, UNDP, GEF and IAEA are the main sources of funds for energy projects. The regional development banks also have substantial lending programmes in support of energy sector development.

15. The entities within the United Nations system are active in all the stages of the energy cycle at the national, regional and global levels. There are activities in energy development and supply, including assessment exploration, production, conversion and distribution of energy resources; promoting the development of renewable sources of energy; and electricity generation and distribution, including rural electrification.

16. Activities and programmes related to energy use include energy conservation, improved energy efficiency and demand-side management and improved management techniques for energy institutions and enterprises. Associated activities include energy planning encompassing policy development, energy analysis and projections, development of methodologies and analytical techniques including models for energy studies and evaluation, and environmental impact assessment. Energy planning has in most cases been taken up as a sectoral activity; however in some instances a more integrated approach is taken, for example, through the integration of energy policies into overall socio-economic development, the integrated assessment of energy and sustainable rural development, the integration of environmental, social and health concerns into energy planning and analysis, energy and environmental planning in urban areas and as part of an integrated resource planning approach.[3]

17. Activities in capacity- and institution-building, awareness-raising, education and training have been pursued through workshops, seminars and dissemination of information (publications and field surveys). Those in technology transfer have been mainly related to the development and commercial application of renewable sources of energy, promotion of energy efficiency and demonstration projects.[3]

C. Assessment of the linkage between energy activities within the United Nations system and sustainable development

18. The activities of many organizations within the United Nations system have over the past years underscored the relation between energy and sustainable development. The policies and mandates of the respective entities, both before and especially since the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, have espoused this trend. The United Nations Conference on New and Renewable Sources of Energy, which adopted the Nairobi Programme of Action for the Development and Utilization of New and Renewable Sources of Energy, has had an impact on the programmes and activities of many organizations: several have introduced or expanded their programmes and projects in the field of new and renewable sources of energy.[3]

19. More recently, the General Assembly, in its resolution 46/235 of 13 April 1992 establishing the Committee on New and Renewable Sources of Energy and on Energy for Development, indicated that in addition to implementing the Nairobi Programme of Action, the Committee would consider energy in relation to the environment. Many entities have been pursuing that mandate. With the adoption of resolution 47/190 of 22 December 1992, in which the Assembly endorsed Agenda 21 and urged the adoption and entry into force of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, the stage was set for linking energy and sustainable development. Entities within the United Nations system

have, as a result, adjusted their programmes and projects in varying degrees to reflect the objectives of Agenda 21.

20. Achieving a sustainable energy future demands a concerted effort by all actors concerned, including the United Nations system. In response to the demands and priorities of the countries that they support, the organizations of the United Nations are involved in a broad range of activities, which in general terms are commensurate with the goals of realizing a sustainable energy future. Increasing attention is being given by a number of entities to energy efficiency, conservation, demand-side management and pricing policies. Several organizations contribute to the promotion and dissemination of clean energy technologies, including clean coal technologies. Support for the further introduction and application of renewable energy sources is increasing, with a special emphasis on improving access of the rural population to energy services. In the area of capacity-building and institutional development, energy-planning activities are increasingly linked to the broader context of socioeconomic or environmental planning and plan implementation.[3]

21. The nature and level of energy activities linked to sustainable development by entities within the United Nations system vary widely. The following developments are of special importance. GEF places strong emphasis on environmentally sound technologies, which tends to favour the development of renewable sources of energy. The World Bank is by far the largest source of funding for environmental programmes and projects, including those related to energy. It is integrating social and environmental dimensions into all its operations, including energy, and all energy projects are screened for social and environmental impacts. UNDP places special emphasis on sustainable energy through the pursuit of more efficient energy patterns and support for major shifts towards renewable sources of energy; it links its energy projects to the overall objectives of the programmes related to poverty alleviation, gender equality and environmental sustainability. The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) continues to stress the need to mobilize energy to fulfil the needs of the food production chain as a means of achieving sustainable rural development. The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development is providing assistance to developing countries in capacity-building in the use of oil futures markets; it has also undertaken a study on the tradeable carbon emission entitlements scheme. The World Solar Summit, initiated by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and held at Harare on 16 and 17 September 1996, attracted considerable political attention to the potential of renewable sources of energy, and follow-up activities have been initiated on the development of the World Solar Programme 1996-2005, including a review of the structure and funding of projects.

22. The activities of the United Nations and its organizations while modest compared to the overall investment in the energy sector, nevertheless have an important role to play as catalysts or models for new developments aimed at achieving a sustainable energy future. The United Nations system has a significant interdisciplinary potential in the energy field that can be effectively used to support sustainable energy development in developing countries and economies in transition.

IV. STRENGTHENING COOPERATION IN AND COORDINATION OF ACTIVITIES IN THE FIELD OF ENERGY

23. The merger of the three United Nations Departments working in the economic and social fields the Department for Development Support and Management Services, the Department for Economic and Social Information and Policy Analysis and the Department for Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development provides a good opportunity to bring together the United Nations Secretariat's analytical, normative and technical capacities. The resulting synergies will enrich both the policy and the technical-cooperation dimensions of United Nations activities in those fields.

24. Through the Statistical Commission Working Group on International Statistical Programmes and Coordination and the Administrative Committee on Coordination Subcommittee on Statistical Activities, the United Nations Secretariat has continued to cooperate and coordinate with entities in the United Nations system in the collection, analysis and application of energy data and information. The Secretariat also addresses energy issues in the context of the World Economic and Social Survey. The Secretariat and other entities of the United Nations system are cooperating in the preparation of reports for the Committee on New and Renewable Sources of Energy and on Energy for Development, the Commission on Sustainable Development and other intergovernmental bodies.

25. The Secretariat, the World Bank and UNDP are cooperating in the implementation of GEF-funded projects at the national, regional and global levels. The United Nations Secretariat, UNDP and the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) are also cooperating in the implementation of sustainable energy projects, such as one on the enhancement of capacity for sustainable energy services for rural development in Asia. The International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women closely cooperates and coordinates its efforts with the regional commissions, the International Training Centre of the International Labour Organization, the United Nations Secretariat and other entities within and outside the United Nations system in its research and training activities related to energy.

26. UNDP and the World Bank have over the years been cooperating in the Energy Sector Management Assistance Programme, with the latter implementing the projects. UNDP, UNEP and the World Bank are the implementing agencies for GEF, which has been providing incremental costs for projects having global environmental benefits. The World Bank, UNDP and a number of other entities within and outside the United Nations system are jointly funding the Financing Energy Services for Small-scale Energy-Users programme. UNDP and the World Bank's Asia Alternative Energy Unit are also cooperating in a project to mainstream renewable energy and energy efficiency activities into the lending operations of the World Bank in the Asia and Pacific region.

27. UNESCO, with the active support of Economic Commission for Europe (ECE), the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) and IAEA, initiated the high-level World Solar Summit Process with the objective of promoting the development and deployment of renewable energy technologies as a contribution to sustainable development. Summit participants adopted the Harare Declaration on Solar Energy and Sustainable Development and the outline of the

World Solar Programme, 1996-2005. Follow-up activities have been initiated in consultation with other entities of the United Nations system on the development and implementation of the World Solar Programme. The Programme could constitute an important element of a broader system-wide programme on renewable sources of energy, in which other entities outside the United Nations may also wish to take part.

28. IAEA is coordinating an inter-agency project on databases and methodologies for comparative assessment of different energy sources for electricity generation in cooperation with a number of regional commissions, the World Bank, UNIDO, the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) and other international organizations.[3] The project, which is aimed at enhancing capabilities for the competent assessment of different sources of energy, could form a basis for system-wide cooperation in the development of methodologies for planning, policy formulation and implementation.

29. WMO and UNEP are cooperating in the work of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change secretariat is cooperating with several intergovernmental organizations and bodies such as the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, UNIDO, the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development and the International Energy Agency on scientific and technological issues and on issues related to national communications (methodological issues, analysis and participation in reviews).

30. At the regional level, ECE and other entities within and outside the United Nations system have been cooperating in implementing the Energy Efficiency 2000 Projects, while ESCAP is executing the UNDP-funded Programme for Asian Cooperation on Energy and Environment. The Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, ESCAP, FAO, the World Bank, regional development banks and other international and regional organizations have been cooperating in the development of rural energy and related rural development projects.[3] The regional commissions are well-placed to coordinate policy development and system-wide involvement in the implementation of energy-related activities and programmes. This seems to be well under way in ECE and ESCAP, both of which should provide valuable models for other regional commissions. There is, in addition, scope for cooperation among the regional commissions, the respective regional development banks and other regional entities.

31. Many activities in energy are undertaken at the country level, during which cooperation and coordination are pursued in various manners in response to the local situation. Such efforts would benefit from a common strategy and enhanced sharing of experiences.

V. RECOMMENDATIONS AND PROPOSALS FOR ENHANCING THE CAPABILITY OF THE UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM IN THE FIELD OF ENERGY FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

32. This section draws heavily on and is similar to the recommendations contained in the report of the Secretary-General to the fifth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development on ongoing energy-related programmes and activities,[3] which were supported by the participants of the Expert Workshop on fostering the linkage between energy and sustainable development within the international institutions.[4]

33. Major changes are required in the current energy systems in order for them to contribute to sustainable development worldwide. This can only be achieved if all actors involved, including the United Nations system, redouble their efforts in a concerted manner to ensure the development, promotion and implementation of policies and programmes aimed at realizing a sustainable energy future.

34. The entities within the United Nations system have an important role to play in developing a reference framework for the energy-related activities of the United Nations system based on a common understanding of a sustainable energy future, and thereby providing synergies to the activities.[3] Such a framework would promote a balanced and mutually reinforcing approach to economic, social and environmental aspects of sustainable energy development and foster partnerships for sustainable energy development with relevant actors outside the United Nations system, particularly with non-United Nations intergovernmental organizations dealing with energy and the private sector. It should be built on the experiences so far gained in inter-agency cooperation and coordination in the energy field.

35. The Commission on Sustainable Development provides a central forum for high-level discussion of issues that are crucial to achieving the goals of sustainable development, including that of a sustainable energy future, at the policy level. The Commission affirmed its functions in coordination with other subsidiary bodies of the Economic and Social Council and other related organizations and institutions. It also stated that the work of the Committee on New and Renewable Sources of Energy and on Energy for Development should be more compatible with and supportive of the work programme of the Commission, and that the Economic and Social Council,in carrying out its functions related to the implementation of General Assembly resolution 50/227, should consider the most effective means of bringing this about.[7] The Committee on New and Renewable Sources of Energy and on Energy for Development addresses all aspects of energy and should continue to play a valuable role in furthering United Nations policy discussion on energy in the years ahead. To that end, its effectiveness would need to be enhanced, through, inter alia, better representation of Governments, improved dissemination of reports to the Committee and of the Committee and increased participation of the organizations of the United Nations system, including regional commissions in the work of the Committee.

36. Inter-agency cooperation and coordination in the field of energy have been rather ad hoc in previous years. The preparation of the report of the

Secretary-General on energy activities[3] for the Commission on Sustainable Development has marked the beginning of enhanced cooperation and coordination that will be pursued along the following lines:

(a) Convening ad hoc meetings of the entities within the United Nations system dealing with energy in order for them: to elaborate a common reference framework for actions in the field of energy and to achieve coherence and effectiveness in energy activities that contribute to sustainable development (this issue was discussed by the Commission and recommended for further consideration by the General Assembly at its nineteenth session in June 1997[7]); to enhance the exchange of information on the different aspects of energy development and use including policy issues; and to help in the improvement of energy data and information systems of the respective organizations;

(b) Devoting part of the agenda of the sessions of the Inter-Agency Committee on Sustainable Development to energy on a regular basis and ensuring linkages with energy-related aspects of the work of other Administrative Committee on Coordination bodies;

(c) Cooperating with organizations outside the United Nations system;

(d) Encouraging joint programming and implementation of energy activities of common interest to the entities within the United Nations system.

VI. OPTIONS FOR HIGH-LEVEL DISCUSSION ON ENERGY

37. In the continuing debate on the crucial role that energy plays in sustainable development and the continuing need for enhancing energy supplies and improving living conditions in developing countries, a number of suggestions have been made for a high-level discussion on the subject.

38. The Committee on New and Renewable Sources of Energy and on Energy for Development, at its second session, invited Member States and entities within the United Nations system to consider convening a United Nations conference on energy for the twenty-first century in the year 2001 to mobilize world opinion for supporting actions at different levels on energy in relation to sustainable development. In that connection, the Committee requested the Secretary-General to prepare a report examining the feasibility and the scope of the proposed conference, in consultation with experts, as necessary, and to submit the report to the General Assembly for consideration at its fifty-second session.[1]

39. The Economic and Social Council, when considering the suggestion of the Committee, requested the Secretary-General, in consultation with regional commissions and entities within the United Nations system, inter alia, to explore all possible options for a high-level discussion on energy, taking into account the results of the fifth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development (7-25 April 1997)[10] and of the nineteenth special session of the General Assembly.[2]

40. The Vienna Expert Workshop on fostering the linkage between energy and sustainable development within the international institutions suggested that there be a dedicated session of the Commission on Sustainable Development towards a sustainable energy future; such a session might be organized in 2001 or earlier, given the needs and possibilities of a major change in current energy systems. The Workshop stressed that appropriate preparation for the proposed session on energy be ensured upon the approval of the 1998-2002 work programme of the Commission on Sustainable Development.[4]

41. Options for a dedicated session of the Commission on Sustainable Development, possibly in 2001, were discussed by the Commission and put forward for consideration by the General Assembly at its nineteenth special session.[7] In the multi-year programme of the Commission on Sustainable Development for the period 1998-2002 that has been forwarded by the Commission on Sustainable Development to the General Assembly for consideration at its nineteenth special session, energy and transport issues are among the subjects proposed for consideration in 2001.[7]

42. Given the fact that options for a high-level discussion on energy are still being considered, no proposals are given at this time.

Notes

[1] Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 1996, Supplement No. 4 (E/1996/24), chap. I.

[2] Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-first Session, Supplement No. 3 (A/51/3 (Part II)), chap. V, sect. B.1, resolution 1996/44.

[3] E/CN.17/1997/7 and Corr.1.

[4] E/CN.17/1997/16, annex.

[5] Energy after Rio: Prospects and Challenges (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.97.III.B.11).

[6] Report of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, Rio de Janeiro, 3-14 June 1992 (A/CONF.151/26/Rev.1 (Vol. I and Vol. I/Corr.1, Vol. II, Vol. III and Vol. III/Corr.1)) (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.93.I.8 and corrigenda), vol. I: Resolutions Adopted by the Conference, resolution 1, annex II.

[7] A/S-19/14-E/1997/60.

[8] E/CN.17/1997/17/Add.1.

[9] E/C.13/1996/7.

[10] Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 1997, Supplement No. 9 (E/1997/29).